

It has somehow developed that whenever one talks of "hangers-on" the image of some "stylyaga" [beatnik] comes to one's mind, complete with a shaggy mop of hair and ultra narrow trousers. It is not all that correct. There are "hangers-on" who, even more aggravating, are of a very, very respectable age—fathers of families.

Here you have three of them. Get acquainted: Moisie Lvovich Chernukhin, born 1907, Zinoviy Isaakovich Roginsky, born 1897, and Shimon Avseyavich Sheyfer, born 1883. They cling to foreign tourists and certain embassies in Moscow. It is unpleasant even to discuss them, but we are duty bound to speak about them as people have been coming to our Editorial Office to complain indignantly about the unsavory conduct of these individuals who have lost all sense of shame and conscience. Let their dirty little deals become public property.

As far back as 1949, Chernukhin, along with other characters of his type, had been telling spurious tales about the conditions of life in our country. This calumny was used by the Israeli press to fan a hostile campaign against the Soviet Union.

In subsequent years Chernukhin many times met with Israeli citizens, obtaining from them Zionist and religious literature as well as items of religious observance. But do not think this was because of an ardent belief in God. The taliths [ritual shawls for prayer—N.E.], for instance, he used to sell to believers at speculative prices.

This hanger-on of declining years just loves embassy receptions. It is a passionate love, and he tries not to miss out on a single one. This love of his led him, a semiliterate, hardly able to read or write, to a reception at the Israeli Embassy held in honor of writers, artists, and scientists who came from Israel to

Moscow to attend the World Congress for Universal Disarmament and Peace. Not conversation on methods of literary and scientific development occupied Chernukhin on that evening. Creeping like a snake from one foreigner to another, he begged for knickknacks, surreptitiously stuffing his pockets and lining his clothes with little booklets of dubious contents which were lavishly strewn on the tables. He did not by-pass oranges and sweets, either. He swiped everything.

Chernukhin does not omit holding out his palms for considerations to foreigners in the Moscow Choral Synagogue. One could see him often enough, not having finished his prayers, plunging headlong to the exit of the synagogue to lie in wait for foreigners.

Chernukhin's conduct evokes righteous indignation on the part of the believing habitués. At their demand he was expelled from the so-called "Committee of Twenty" [the governing body of the synagogue—N.E.], which deprived Chernukhin of the means to mingle with foreign guests, but this did not stop the ardent hanger-on. He manages to squeeze into the synagogue by the back door for a cringing handshake with foreigners, at the same time wheedling something for his speculative machinations.

His visits to embassies are dictated by a determination to grab as much foreign knickknacks and foreign literature as possible with the aim of speculation.

A characteristic instance. On October 17, 1962, the Israeli Embassy organized a reception on the occasion of the Jewish New Year. Of course, Roginsky was there. The guests were talking and exchanging news while Roginsky was skipping around the tables, well-stocked with taliths, prayer books, books, journals, records, postcards, etc. The longer he skipped around these tables the thicker his pockets got, and the wider

swelled his sides. Toward the end of the reception Roginsky had grown so "obese" that one could hardly recognize him.

Sheyfer prefers to "work" at the synagogue. He spends all his free time there, and that he has in abundance. He is an old-age pensioner. Suffice it for a foreigner to show his face at the synagogue—Sheyfer is right there at his side begging for taliths, literature, and overseas knickknacks. The more the better.

Just a short while ago, on June 1, Sheyfer (for the umpteenth time) became the hero of a scandalous incident. During the service at Choral Synagogue, he sneaked into the box where the foreigners were sitting and started begging for "souvenirs." A member of the congregation, Rabinovich, told him off. In answer to this, such a torrent of abuse poured out of Sheyfer's lips that even an edited version of it would be too indecent to print. Sheyfer was running amok to such an extent that members of the congregation were compelled to throw him out of doors.

One could supply many more facts about the conduct of Chernukhin, Roginsky, and Sheyfer, but even from what has already been said it is clear how low these far-from-young people have fallen. Hangers-on like Chernukhin, Roginsky, Sheyfer, and the likes of them do not act out of friendly feelings toward foreigners nor out of a desire to help them to know our country and the life of the Soviet people better. Avarice, groveling servility before everything foreign, spiritual waste, lack of pride in our great motherland—these impel the Chernukhins, Roginskys, and the Sheyfers into the embraces of sometimes not entirely blameless foreigners.

A few words addressed to those who are palsy-walsy with such hangers-on.

Every year more and more Soviet people go abroad,

more and more foreigners visit the Soviet Union. We have no intention at all to conceal ourselves from them with a stone wall. But we have our own Soviet pride. We do not like to breathe the same air with hangers-on and loafers, to be with them in the same room. Foreigners should never forget it if they really want to have true friends among Soviet citizens.²¹

Countless such articles appear every year, in major newspapers like Pravda, Izvestia, and Trud, as well as in local papers. Although the names and the circumstances differ, the characterization of Jews remains constant. They are uniformly depicted as marginal men, parasites on the Soviet economy, sneaky and "snakelike" in their movements, seeking out "not entirely blameless" foreigners for the purpose of maligning the Soviet homeland and gaining small trinkets and devotional articles which they later sell at exorbitant prices. Hints of conspiracy with Israeli embassy officials are common. While some of these newspaper articles seem to be gratuitously insulting, others are directed at a clear goal. For example, the virulent press campaign conducted in Lvov from February to November, 1962, finally resulted in the closing of the Great Synagogue of Lvov, the last Jewish house of prayer in that Ukrainian city.²² Indeed, the campaign against the Jewish religion has had the effect of reducing the number

²¹ Quoted from Jews in Eastern Europe, September, 1963.

²² For an analysis and excerpts from the Soviet press, see Moshe Decter, "The Lvov Case: A Self-Portrait of Soviet Anti-Semitism," Midstream, June, 1963.

of synagogues in the Soviet Union from a mere 450 in 1956 to 96 by April, 1963, and to 60 by the summer of 1965. Jews are consistently portrayed as visiting the synagogue for the sole purpose of dealing in black-market goods and engaging in anti-Soviet espionage activities.

Very often, charges against the Jewish religion are linked to themes of ideological subversion and political disloyalty on the part of Jews, especially their alleged subversive ties with the state of Israel. The Soviet Union, in 1948, was the first country in the world to extend formal recognition to Israel, but this initial overture was abruptly followed by a policy of hostility. Attacks by the press often concern themselves with the holiday of Passover and its supposed message of nationalistic independence which is exploited by "Zionist conspirators":

The peculiar characteristic of most Jewish holidays is their clear expression of nationalism. Such festivals as Passover, for example, give rise to nationalist feelings, and poison the minds of Jews by diverting their thoughts to Israel, "the land of their fathers." . . . Judaism kills love for the Soviet motherland.²³

Jewish bourgeois organizations are doing their utmost to revive Judaism in our circumstances. Many Israeli tourists disseminate Zionist literature. Every year the Minsk synagogue receives matzah packages from abroad. But the matter doesn't stop at these "gifts" alone. Judaism is trying to create an ideologi-

²³ F. S. Mayatsky in *Sovietskaya Moldavia*, official daily government newspaper in Kishinev, capital of Moldavia, July 23, 1959.

cal subversion, to fill the consciousness of working Jews in our country with bourgeois ideology.²⁴

One key phrase that occurs time and again in Soviet portrayals of Jews is that of "the golden calf." Jews are depicted as eagerly debasing themselves in a frantic search for profit, and the scene of their nefarious activities is frequently the synagogue:

For these "saints" nothing is holy! But there is one thing they consider holy: Money, money, money. . . . And the flow comes through into the pockets of the parasites of the Jewish synagogue of Alma Ata.

Money—this is their ideal. . . . This spring, Fanya Weisman and Sioma Weiner began to bake matzah. Were they motivated by religious feelings? Oh no! They wanted to profit from believers.

Stuffing themselves with matzoth and ethrogim, the preachers of Judaism—Spector, Kotlaryevsky, Shuchat, and Monastyrsky—pray only to the golden calf: how to collect more money from the believers for their own needs and for the militant spirit of the Israeli militarists.

The gods of the servitors of the synagogue are profit and money—"the golden calf."²⁵

The campaign to discredit Jews and Judaism reached a climax of a sort during the economic

²⁴ From "The Shadow of the Synagogue," by J. Muraviev, in *Zvezda*, the leading Byelorussian-language paper of Minsk, capital of the Byelorussian republic, February 2, 1965. For an appraisal of Soviet-Israel relations see "Israel in the Soviet Mirror," a special issue of *Jews in Eastern Europe*, December, 1965.

²⁵ Quoted in "Passover and Matzoth: A Case History of Soviet Policy."

trials held in the Soviet Union from 1961 to 1965, which saw the reintroduction of capital punishment for crimes like embezzlement, bribery, and currency speculation. (Contrary to first reports, it now appears that the sentences were indeed carried out.) Thousands of persons were arrested, tried, and convicted to the accompaniment of sweeping press coverage and notoriety. Of the more than 200 sentenced to death, about 55 per cent were Jews, and in the Ukraine 80 per cent were Jews. The press campaign focused almost exclusively and with extraordinary zeal on the Jewish malefactors, and the reports reaching the West soon elicited a wave of protest, highlighted by Bertrand Russell's appeal to Premier Khrushchev for an amnesty.²⁶ A study of the economic trials carried out by the International Commission of Jurists concluded:

There has been an insidious and sometimes subtle propaganda campaign directed against the Jewish people of the Soviet Union, specifically against those charged with economic crimes and also against the supposed general characteristics of Jews that have been reiterated for centuries. If the reports of trials for economic crimes are even reasonably complete, the number of Jews receiving death sentences and severe terms of imprisonment is greatly disproportionate to their number as a minority group. . . .

There is undoubtedly also a certain amount of anti-Semitic prejudice at all levels of Soviet society. . . . It is a simple matter to link the picture of the money-grubbing Jew of anti-Semitic fancy with the picture of

²⁶ Pravda and Izvestia, February 28, 1963.

the archvillains of capitalist cupidity. This had certainly been done by the Soviet press, but the most that can safely be said is that the picture painted of the moral malaise in the Soviet Union diverts attention toward Jews because the primary object of the Soviet polity is to divert attention away from the real truth, to find scapegoats. . . . It is a tragedy for the Soviet Jewish people that they have been made the scapegoat for the transgressions of those whose guilt it would be dangerous to make public.²⁷

Apprehension over Soviet treatment of Jews turned into outrage in February, 1964, when news reached the West of the publication of an anti-Semitic tract by the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev. The book was Judaism without Embellishment, written by Professor Trofim Kichko, a Ukrainian academic "specialist" on Jews and Judaism. It was published in an edition of twelve thousand copies as a "scientific" study and work of scholarship, with the following imprimatur from the Academy of Sciences:

There is no doubt that the profound and substantial work by T. K. Kichko, which contains a tremendous amount of factual material conscientiously and scientifically analyzed, will be a valuable manual for propagandists of atheism in their daily work and will assist wide circles of readers to appraise questions regarding the Jewish religion.²⁸

The contents of the 192-page volume are famil-

²⁷ "Economic Crimes in the Soviet Union," in Journal of the International Commission of Jurists, Summer, 1964. See also Moshe Decter, "Soviet Justice and the Jews," Midstream, March, 1965.

²⁸ See Moshe Decter, "The Soviet Book That Shook the Communist World," Midstream, June, 1964.

iar enough. The book asserts that Judaism teaches contempt for workers and peasants, glorifies usury and extortion, and leads its adherents into hypocrisy, bribery, and financial speculation. Judaism "is impregnated with narrow practicality, with greed, the love of money, and the spirit of egoism." The book further connects Judaism with a worldwide conspiracy of Zionism and Western capitalism.

The text of Judaism without Embellishment is illustrated with a series of vicious cartoons sharply reminiscent of Nazi propaganda caricatures of the type found in Julius Streicher's Der Stuermer. They depict hooknosed Jews, wearing phylacteries, in the act of confiscating synagogue funds or brawling in the synagogue over the distribution of spoils won from speculation in matzah and pigs and from thievery, deception, and debauchery. Ben-Gurion is seen "at work," erasing the word "not" from the Commandments, "Thou shalt not lie [sic]," "Thou shalt not murder," "Thou shalt not steal"; another cartoon, captioned "Bonn-Gurion," shows the ghost of Auschwitz trying to restrain the former premier of Israel from signing a document entitled, "An Agreement to Supply Arms to the Bundeswehr," a reference to the alleged military alliance between Israel and West Germany. Another illustration depicts a servile Jew licking a gigantic Nazi Storm Trooper boot, in allusion to the frequent Soviet assertion that during the years of the Hitlerite occupation, Zionist leaders served the Nazis and collaborated in their plans.

The publication of Judaism without Embellishment provoked an unprecedented storm of world-wide protest, most notably on the part of Jewish and general communist movements in Western Europe, Latin America, Australia, and the United States. For the first time, Soviet authorities found it necessary to issue a public disavowal. The book was criticized, with certain qualifications, by the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, and this criticism was published in the Soviet press.²⁹ According to various reports, the remaining copies of the book were apparently seized and destroyed.³⁰

The "Kichko Affair" did much to mobilize public opinion outside the Soviet Union and to shape the growing swell of protest over the treatment of Russian's Jews. The British philosopher Bertrand Russell, an influential friend of the Soviet Union, has repeatedly lent his name to such protests and has himself written to various Soviet spokesmen, including former Premier Khrushchev and Aron Vergelis, the editor of Sovietish Heimland. (From his public pronouncements and past history, it is evident that Vergelis serves as a fac-totum of the Soviet authorities.) In July of 1964 Lord Russell wrote to Vergelis and enclosed an appeal he had received from a Jewish citizen of the USSR. The two letters follow (the second is in translation):³¹

²⁹ Pravda, April 4, 1964.

³⁰ London Jewish Chronicle, April 10, 1964.

³¹ Quoted in Jews in Eastern Europe, November, 1964. Lord Russell's letter was printed in Sovietish Heimland; the appeal of the Russian Jews was not. For the ensuing exchange between Vergelis and Russell, see Commentary, January, 1965.